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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000249

SIPDIS

STATE PASS DOE FOR DAS JBRODMAN AND CGAY
TREASURY FOR ASEVERENS AND SRENENDER
COMMERCE FOR KBURRESS
STATE PASS TRANSPORTATION FOR MARAD
STATE PASS USAID FOR GWEYNAND AND SLAWAETZ
STATE FOR DS/IP/AF, AF/EX, DS/IP/OPO, DS/ICI/PII, DS/DSS/ITA
LONDON PASS TO AMBASSADOR CAMPBELL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/29/2016

TAGS: [EPET](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [KHLs](#) [PINR](#) [ETRD](#) [CASC](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: NINE HOSTAGES SEIZED, INCLUDING AMCITS,
SITREP #1

REF: A. LAGOS 248

[1](#)B. LAGOS 233

Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for Reasons 1.4 (D & E)

Nine Hostages Taken near Forcados, 3 Americans

[1](#)1. (C) Nine expatriate hostages were taken from a Willbros construction barge around 7:15am. The barge was working on a Shell platform in Forcados, Delta State. The hostage-takers boarded the vessel, and afterward selected the nine from the 45 expatriate and 55 Nigerian workers on the barge at that time. Providing further detail about the incident, a Control Risk Group (CRG) contractor working for Willbros said the kidnappers came in 5-7 speedboats and surrounded the barge. According to another source, a firefight took place between the kidnappers and the Nigerian security presence on the vessel. Two members of the Nigerian security contingent were injured as a result. The nationalities of the hostages are: 3 Americans, 1 Brit, 2 Egyptians, 2 Thai, and 1 Filipino. The Americans were identified as:

-- Macon Hawkins, construction manager (DPOB 3/1/1937, TX)
-- Russell Spell, leaderman (DPOB 12/14/1964, IN)
-- Cody Oswalt, tower operator (DPOB 11/16/1982, MS)

According to Willbros, Hawkins is diabetic.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Around the time and in the same proximity, a boat belonging to LINMALCO, another Shell contractor operating in the same area, was also attacked, presumably by the same attackers. Fortunately, there are no reported casualties or hostages associated with the LINMALCO incident.

[1](#)3. (SBU) This morning, a Shell official alerted us the crude loading platform at their Forcados facility, located 5 miles offshore, had been attacked between 5:00am and 6:00am. A fire erupted as a result of this attack. The fire apparently has been extinguished but Shell has closed this important facility. The Forcados facility exports between 350,000 and 380,000 barrels per day (BPD). Due to the violence, Shell is also seriously contemplating closing other facilities in the area for today.

[1](#)4. (C) A pipeline on the north Escravos field was also attacked around 4:00 am. Media report the pipeline belongs to the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) subsidiary, Pipelines and Products Management Company (PPMC).

MEND Claims Responsibility: Threatens Further Attacks

[1](#)5. (U) In a statement released today, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) claimed responsibility for three attacks today. In the statement, the group claims these were retaliatory actions in response to the military attacks on the Gbaramatu area a few days ago (reftels). MEND has threatened further attacks and has demanded all expatriates leave the region.

[1](#)6. (C) A security contractor told us Shell's Soku facility had been threatened and militants planned to infiltrate the facility wearing Shell uniforms and badges. The company has reportedly warned employees not to come to work at that facility for the next 3 days.

Post Actions

[1](#)7. (SBU) Consular is issuing the Department-approved warden

statement. Consular is working with Willbros USA to notify the AmCit hostages' next-of-kin. Legatt is requesting assistance from FBI hostage negotiators and forensics specialists. EAC members are in contact with their Nigerian state and federal government as well as military and law enforcement counterparts.

Comment

18. (C) Comment: The militants apparently have launched a serious attack in response to what they perceive as last week's GON military actions against them, or at least, their bunkering livelihoods. If, as it claims, MEND is the author of the attacks, then it has displayed an ability to coordinate highly aggressive attacks in the creeks as well as offshore. Right now the militia's ire is directed at Shell. The other majors are breathing uneasy sighs of relief for the moment. (Of the majors, Shell has the longest history in Nigeria and much of that history has not been one of harmonious relations with local communities.) The militia knew what they were doing when they hit the Forcados facility. Should that facility remain shut for some time, Nigeria's production would take a material diminution. Coupled with the closure of Cawthorn Channel (40,000 bpd) in Rivers State, Shell could be minus approximately 400,000 bpd, which represents slightly less than 20 percent of Nigeria's overall production.

19. (C) Comment continued: With regard to the hostages, we hope for a quick release. However, if the January taking is a barometer, that hope may not be realized. The kidnappers may feel that the military activity of last week demonstrates the GON reneged on the promised amnesty against reprisal for the January kidnappings. This time around the kidnappers may be even more hardline and strident in their demands for the release of the expatriates. End comment.
BROWNE